



Air-India International Demonstrates New Equipment and Announces Plans

ONLOOKERS at London Airport are no longer thrilled by the elegance and performance of the Constellation. Almost weekly the type becomes more common. Lately, however, they have spared more than a passing glance for the red and silver splendour of *Rajput Princess*, one of three Model L-749s acquired by Air-India International for the Bombay-London service.

The *Princess* was engaged last week in making the second two-way proving flight over the route (by way of Geneva and Cairo) and an opportunity was taken of sampling her comforts and conveniences. Like her sister ships, *Mogul Princess* and *Malabar Princess*, she is laid out as a 40-seater and, though bunks are installed, these will not normally be used. A partition divides the cabin into two compartments and effectively dispels the "tunnel" impression characteristic of the Constellation's interior. A purser and hostess are carried, but regrettably it has proved impractical to attire the lady in a picturesque sari.

Conversation with Mr. S. K. Kooka, traffic manager of Air-India International, and Captain K. Vishwanath, pilot of *Rajput Princess*, brought new information on the composition of the company and its proposed operations. Like others in India, the company is not nationalized, but the Government of India have a 49 per cent holding, with the option of a further 2 per cent. The domestic company—Air-India—are managing agents.

London-Bombay in 23 Hours

One more proving flight will be undertaken, late this month, before the first regular service leaves Bombay on June 8th, arriving at London Airport on the following day. The inaugural eastbound service is scheduled for June 11th. Westbound, the time for the trip is 26 hours, inclusive of stops; eastbound, 23 hours. For the first four or five weeks the frequency will be one service a week, but eventually there will be two trips weekly. The London-Geneva legs will normally be flown at 6,000-9,000ft; Geneva-Cairo at 12,000-14,000ft; and Cairo-Bombay—the longest stretch—at 19,000ft or so.

Captain Vishwanath, like other Constellation captains, is full of praise for his aircraft. He demonstrated the Curtiss reversible-pitch airscrews, both on leaving the parking area and during the landing run; the amazingly short take-off (about 13 seconds with light load); high initial rate of climb (1,200 ft/min) and cruising speed (275-285 m.p.h.). In the cockpit one watched the rate-of-descent indicator unwinding at 2,000 ft/min, though the pressurizing prohibited aural indication of the rapid change of height.

The captain is 32 years old. He learned to fly on Miles Hawks, with Phillips and Powis, at Reading, and took his commercial licence at Croydon during 1936. Returning to India, he joined the Tata organization and was engaged in the Empire air-mail scheme. Lately he has visited America for conversion on to the Constellation, and spent three months at



The pilots, radio operator and flight engineer are housed snugly, if not luxuriously.